Procedure for pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar

3600. SHRIMATI ANANDIBEN JETHABHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of pilgrims who visited Mansarovar in China during 1992-93;

(b) what are the procedures to give permission for travel to Mansarovar;

(c) what are the facilities accorded to pilgrims for travel to Mansarovar by the Government of India or China; and

(d) what are the difficulties faced by travellers to Mansarovar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) to (d) 598 pilgrims visited Kailash Mansarovar in 1992 and 1993 under the Yatra organised by Government.

Government receive applications from Indian citizens who wish to travel to Kailash-Mansarovar. Applicants are elected on a random basis and taking into account their medical fitness.

The facilities provided to pilgrims by the Government include, inter alia medical assistance, wireless cover, communication links with China, issuance of foreign exchange and aerial evacuation of pilgrims in case of emergency. Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam is responsible for the logistics on the Indian side. Facilities provided by the Chinese Government include inter alia, boarding, lodging arrangement for guides and ponies|yaks, etc.

Most of the difficulties faced by pilgrims arise from the tough terrain, high attitude and remoteness of the area. The ardous nature of the pilgrimage brings with it associated difficulties including medical problems in some cases.

पूर्ववर्ती सोवियत गणराज्यों में भारतीय छात्र

3601. **श्री जगन्नाथ सिंह** : क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) 1 सितम्बर, 1994 की स्थिति के अनुसार पूर्ववर्ती सोवियत संघ के गणराज्यों मे कितने भारतीय छात्र अध्ययनरत हैं;

(ख) क्या पूर्ववर्ती सोवियत संघ के गणराज्यों में अध्ययनरत छात्रों को छात्रवृत्तियां और शिक्षावृत्तियां दी जा रही हैं ; और

(ग) क्या इन सभी गणराज्यों से भारत के राजनयिक संबंध है और क्या इन गणराज्यों में भारतीय दूतावास स्थापित किये गये हैं ?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री आर०एल० भाटिया) : (क) पूर्व सोवियता संघ के स्वतंत्र राज्यों में अध्ययनरत भारतीय विद्यार्थियों की सही-सही संख्या उपलब्ध नहीं है क्योंकि इन विद्यार्थियों से यह अपेक्षा नहीं की जाती है कि वे राजदूतावासों में अपना नाम पंजीकृत करायें । तथापि, हमारे मिशनों में उपलब्ध वर्ष 1994–95 के आंकड़ों के अनुसार इन देशों में अध्ययन कर रहे विद्यार्थियों की संख्या लगभग 5078 है ।

(ख) जहां तक छात्रवृत्तियो और फलोशिप का संबंध है, सरकार से सरकार के आधार पर प्रायोजित किये जाने वाले विद्यार्थियों से संबंधित सूचना उपलब्ध है । उपलब्ध सूचना के अनुसार प्रायोजित किये गये उन विद्यार्थियों की संख्या जो इस समय पूर्व सोवियत संघ के अलग-अलग राज्यों में शिक्षा सुविधायें प्राप्त कर रहे हैं, लगभग 2000 है ।

(ग) भारत ने पूर्व सोवियत संघ के सभी स्वतंत्र राज्यों के साथ अपने राजनयिक संबंध स्थापित कर लिये हैं ।

हालांकि रूसी परिसंघ, उक्रेन, बेलारूस, कजाकस्तान, उजबेकिस्तान, ताजिकिस्तान, किर्गिजस्तान और तुर्कमेनिस्तान में हमारे आवासी मिशन कार्य कर रहे हैं लेकिन जहां तक अन्य राज्यों का संबंध है उनमें सह-प्रत्यायन किया गया है ।

Visit of Indian Nationals to pilgrim centres abroad

3602. SHRI VISHNUKANT SHASTRI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) which are the pilgrimage centres in foreign countries where Indian nationals go annually;

(b) what are the criteria for electing pilgrims for these pilgrimages;

(c) the expenditure involvel, per-head,, pilgrimage-wise and the amount charged from the individuals for these pilgrimages, separately;

(d) what is the mode of transport, pilgrimage-wise; and

(e) what subsidy is given by Government to a pilgrim, pilgrimage-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA):

SAUDI ARABIA

(a) Our nationals visit Saudi Arabia annually to undertake the Haj pilgrimage.

(b) A quota of Haj pilgrims is decided every year in consultation with the Ministry of Finance. Applications are invited well in advance of the event by the Central Haj Committee, a statutory body constituted in terms of the Haj Act of 1959. Final selection of the pilgrims is carried out through draw of lots conducted by the State Haj committees. Applicants having already performed in the past five years are not included in the process of draw of lots. Those over 65 years of age are given preference over the other applicants and are separately selected.

(c) Successful applicants are permitted by the Ministry of Finance to purchase against Indian rupees foreign exchange worth of either SR 5,500 or 4,600. This amount in foreign exchange is released to enable the pilgrims to defray expenditulre on boarding, lodging and payment of compulsory dues including internal transport in Saudi Arabia. Besides, a pilgrim is required to purchase his ticket for Air travel.

(d) Till last year i.e. 1994. Haj pilgrims had been proceeding to Saudi Arabia both by Air and by sea. Beginning from Haj 1996 (which falls on May 9). Government have decided to discontinue sailings for Haj. The pilgrims will therefore be travelling to and from Saudi Arabia for Haj by Air only.

(e) The Central Haj Committee organises Haj Charters with the help of the Department of Civil Aviation and Air India. International Air carriers are invired to bid and negotiations are conducted to determine the charter air fare for Haj. The fare to be charged from each pilgrim is decided by the Cabinet. The difference between the charter fare and the fare payable by the pilgrim is borne on the budget of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tousism. for Haj 1994, this difference worked out to Rs. 5,000 per pilgrim. As regards Haj 1995, Cabinet decision on the fare to be charged from the pilgrim is expected shortly. The quantum of the difference borne by the Government will be known only after the decision is taken.

TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION OF CHINA

(a) Kailash-Manasarovar Yatra

(b) The pilgrim apply to the Ministrw of External Affairs in response to thhe advertisement placed in leading dailies. Pilgrims are then selected on a random basis and those found medically fit proceed for the pilgrimage.

(c) The Chinese Government charges US S 500 for the pilgrimage (1994).